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Chairman: Mr. Loedel ..... (Uruguay)

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03-54262 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of a Vice-Chairman

2. **Ms. Ferrari** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) nominated Mr. Lamba (Malawi) for the post of Vice-Chairman.

3. *Mr. Lamba (Malawi) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.*

Agenda item 19: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VIII-X, A/58/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. D-F), A/58/171; aide-memoire 1/03)

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Agenda item 89: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VI, A/57/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. C), A/58/66; A/C.4/58/CRP.1)

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VI, A/57/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. C), A/58/66; A/C.4/58/CRP.1)

Agenda item 90: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/58/71)

4. **The Chairman** said that it was due to the untiring efforts of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples that many of the 191 Member States were now represented as free and independent States. The sterling work accomplished by the Special Committee was one of the greatest successes of the United Nations since its inception.

5. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, introduced the report of the Special Committee on its work during 2003 (A/58/23). The Special Committee's recommendations were contained in part III of the report.

6. In 2003, for the first time in its history, the Special Committee had held its annual Seminar in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Anguilla. He noted that the attendance at the Seminar had been unprecedented. He welcomed the cooperation shown by the administering Power and the Government of Anguilla, which had contributed to the success of the Seminar.

7. During the period under review, the Special Committee had been guided in its work by the goals of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the Plan of Action, which contained specific recommendations for the administering Powers, the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other entities, in order to expedite the end of colonialism.

8. The Special Committee attached great importance to the intensification of dialogue and cooperation with the administering Powers for the purpose of achieving decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories remaining on the list. Those contacts had been particularly fruitful in the case of New Zealand and the Tokelau Islands. The visiting mission which had gone to the Territory in 2002 had recommended that a study should be conducted on the self-determination options and their implications. The Special Committee was waiting for the terms of reference for the study, which the United Nations Development Programme stood ready to finance, to be finalized.

9. The United Kingdom and the United States had continued their informal contacts and consultations with the Special Committee. The participation by a high-level representative of the United Kingdom in the seminar in Anguilla had proved to be highly beneficial for the representatives of the Special Committee and for the participants from the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In 2004, the Special Committee intended to

broaden the dialogue with the administering Powers and it hoped that their cooperation would eventually lead to their formal participation in the work of the Special Committee.

10. With respect to visiting missions, the Special Committee continued to attach the utmost importance to such missions as a primary source of information about the wishes and aspirations of the peoples in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It intended to continue to seek the cooperation of the administering Powers in that area.

11. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, gave a brief overview of the activities of the Special Committee since the start of 2003.

12. Three years into the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories were still on the Special Committee's list. The Special Committee therefore continued to fulfil its mandate to review the information transmitted by the administering Powers under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

13. The regional seminars held each year offered a valuable opportunity for the representatives of the Territories, as well as for experts and non-governmental organizations, to highlight the particular political and socio-economic problems facing the Territories, and for the Special Committee to inform participants about its work. The 2003 Seminar had been held for the first time in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, Anguilla, thanks to the prior support of the administering Power and the cooperation of the Territorial Government. The main focus of the Seminar had been the process of decolonization in the Caribbean Territories and Bermuda, and the new format had led to a fruitful dialogue. On its return to New York, the Special Committee had adopted the substantive recommendations and conclusions of the Seminar and had held its June session.

14. The Chairman of the Special Committee had followed up on the Seminar's recommendations by requesting that talks should be held with representatives of the United Kingdom concerning the process of constitutional modernization in the Caribbean Territories and Bermuda, on the basis of the principle of self-determination established by the United Nations. A similar approach had been taken with the representatives of the United States of America regarding the decolonization process in American Samoa. The initial reaction of both administering Powers had been positive. In that regard, the Special Committee continued to enjoy the active and long-standing cooperation of New Zealand and of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Tokelau.

15. He urged the members of the Fourth Committee to take a positive view of the recommendations submitted to the General Assembly by the Special Committee.

16. **Mr. Balarezo** (Peru), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group, said that one of the main objectives of the United Nations had been to ensure that the peoples of the world could exercise the greatest possible degree of self-government. Thanks to the efforts of the Organization, over 80 million people had been able to exercise their right to self-determination. It was thus undeniable that the process of decolonization had been one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations.

17. Recalling the important role played by the Special Committee, he said that it was essential to implement the Special Committee's recommendations and he appealed to the administering Powers and the States concerned to do so without delay since, as stated in resolution 1514 (XV), the continued existence of colonialism was "contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation".

18. With respect to the remaining colonial situations, the States members of the Rio Group wished to state the following: (a) the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should, as soon as possible, resume negotiations aimed at finding a just, peaceful, and lasting solution to the dispute over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; (b) with regard to the Caribbean Territories the Rio Group welcomed the holding of the 2003 Seminar on decolonization held in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Anguilla and hoped that its conclusions and recommendations would be implemented without further delay; and (c) with regard to Western Sahara, the Rio Group reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations to help the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination

through a just, mutually acceptable and durable solution.

19. Lastly, he reiterated the commitment of the States members of the Rio Group to the definitive elimination of colonialism in all its forms, and urged all States Members of the United Nations to work together constructively and unreservedly with a view to achieving that goal before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

20. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba) said that decolonization had made little progress in recent years and that the list of remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories had barely changed. That was not surprising, however, since certain administrating Powers continued to use all kinds of pretexts to justify their refusal to bring a definitive end to colonialism; refused to maintain official working relations with the Special Committee on decolonization, and hindered its work, for instance by launching disinformation campaigns to distort its purposes; tried to find ways to remove their colonial Territories from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories; and even tried to discredit the work of the Fourth Committee by proposing, within the context of the consideration of the revitalization of the bodies of the General Assembly, that it should be either disbanded or merged with other Committees, as if the questions it considered were not sufficiently relevant or important.

21. Yet, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on information from Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/58/69), some administering Powers continued to behave like colonial Powers by conducting military manoeuvres in Non-Self-Governing Territories under their jurisdiction, thereby causing serious harm to the health of their inhabitants and seriously damaging their ecological systems, and by shamefully exploiting their land and maritime resources, in flagrant violation of General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV).

22. In order to remedy that situation, the United Nations should continue to give active consideration to the decolonization question. In that regard, the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism should not simply become another agenda item to be considered only when reaching its conclusion. Moreover, priority should continue to be given to the holding of regional seminars on decolonization — the most recent of which, held in Anguilla, had been the first to be held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory — and the Department of Public Information should give priority to the dissemination of their outcomes, not only on the web site of the Special Committee on decolonization, but also among States Members of the Organization through the proper use of the media. Similarly, ways should be found to increase the educational and vocational training opportunities available to young people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which were still far from adequate. Member States with the necessary economic resources, in particular, should address that question.

23. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the series of resolutions recognizing the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence. It also welcomed the consensus achieved on the resolution concerning Puerto Rico submitted to the Special Committee in June 2002. The withdrawal of the United States Navy from the Puerto Rican island of Vieques in May 2002 represented a clear victory for the Puerto Rican people and for all the countries that had supported it. However, the question of the clean-up of the island and the transfer of the former firing range to the local authorities remained unresolved.

24. His delegation also wished to express its deep concern about the obvious stalemate in the Western Sahara peace process, which was preventing the establishment of a lasting peace in the region and continuing to exacerbate the living conditions of the Saharan people. It also wished to reaffirm its belief that the holding of a fair, transparent and impartial referendum under United Nations auspices, and strict adherence to the Settlement Plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, the Houston Accords, and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions were the only ways to ensure an honourable settlement of the conflict. Similarly, his delegation wished to reaffirm the legitimacy of Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands (Falklands) and urged the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to pursue negotiations with a view to achieving a just, peaceful and honourable settlement of their dispute. It also called upon the administering Power of Guam to cooperate fully with the Committee.

25. **Ms. Rivero** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern Common Market

(MERCOSUR) (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and its associated States (Bolivia and Chile), said that the States in question wished to associate themselves with the previous statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. They strongly supported the decolonization process and the work of the Special Committee. She wished in particular to refer to a special colonial situation which was still unresolved, namely, that of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia, and the South Sandwich Islands, as well as the surrounding maritime zone, which had long been the subject of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom. The General Assembly, the Special Committee and the Organization of American States had adopted numerous resolutions on the subject.

26. MERCOSUR and its associated States were directly concerned by the problem, which not only prolonged an abnormal and unjust situation for Argentina, but also hampered their plan to transform the South Atlantic region into a genuine zone of peace. They would continue to be fully supportive of efforts to bring a definitive end to that anachronistic colonial situation and reaffirmed the terms of the statements they had made regarding the Malvinas Islands, which had been adopted at the meetings of the Presidents of the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile, in 1996 and 1999.

27. **Mr. Alcalay** (Venezuela) fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group. Having changed its working methods with a view to improving its effectiveness, the Special Committee on decolonization was now in a position to look at the political, economic and social situation of each Non-Self-Governing Territory, an essential prerequisite of it was to fully understand their specific characteristics and recommend measures that were appropriate to each. And yet, some thought that the Committee did little for some of those Territories, while others even believed that the Committee was just wasting its time adopting, year after year, resolutions that had no effect. Those judgements were unfair and were sometimes the result of poor information. The results achieved by the Special Committee since its inception were clear for all to see, as demonstrated by the gratitude expressed to the Special Committee by those who had benefited directly from its actions. It was merely a question of overcoming the obstacles that had prevented the full implementation of the resolutions on decolonization, and the Special Committee must continue to play a central role in that process.

28. With respect to the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, his delegation wished to reaffirm its support for Argentina in its struggle to assert its sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands. It once again urged the parties concerned to resume negotiations, believing that dialogue at the highest level and increasingly close cooperation between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom offered the necessary conditions for the opening of talks. With regard to the decolonization of Western Sahara, his delegation reiterated its support for the holding of a fair and impartial referendum in the near future. It believed that the Saharan people must be able to exercise freely their inalienable right to determine their own destiny, and urged the parties concerned to cooperate with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in order to find a peaceful, fair, and lasting solution to the conflict.

29. **Mr. Awad** (Egypt) welcomed the idea of organizing consultations among Member States in order to reach agreement on a review of the agenda items allocated to the Fourth Committee. His delegation looked forward to participating in any such consultations. In that context, he said that the Committee must bear in mind the statements made by delegates in plenary meetings during the two weeks of the General Assembly's general debate with regard to the issues of reform and modernization and the need to bring about the desired changes in various aspects of the Organization's work, as well as in the process by which its subsidiary bodies considered essential international issues, with a view to strengthening the two concepts of pluralism and collective action and consolidating the fundamental principles set forth in the Charter. The events which the world had witnessed during the past year confirmed that many of the issues before the Fourth Committee must be approached from both a philosophical and a practical angle, in a complementary and balanced manner, in particular the issue of the eradication of colonialism and the right of colonial peoples to self-determination and to sovereignty over their Territory.

30. The Special Committee had made recommendations concerning the dissemination of information relating to the eradication of colonialism in its annual report. In that connection, he stressed the

need for the Organization to act more effectively to mobilize world public opinion and provide peoples subjected to foreign occupation with the means to increase awareness of their legitimate struggle for independence. It was also just as necessary to increase awareness of the Organization's activities in that area, given that all colonial situations and efforts made to eliminate them must be managed in an even-handed manner, without giving priority to any particular geographical zone or to issues determined by their relationship to others. There must therefore be continuous and constructive communication and exchanges of views between the Special Committee and the Secretariat Departments for Political Affairs and for Public Information, in order to determine the best method for achieving the objectives of the Declaration on decolonization, and to define a clear policy and information vision which would consolidate the principles of the Charter and lead to peaceful action to increase awareness of the rights and suffering of those peoples, in particular with regard to their right to sovereignty over their Territory. The Organization could use various instruments for that purpose in order to obtain the best possible results. Cooperation between the United Nations and civil society and the regional organizations concerned was equally important, given the skills of the latter organizations and their potential influence.

31. Particular importance must be given to the evaluation of the effectiveness of and need for visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Although such missions were undeniably a useful instrument for ascertaining the true situation in the Territories, it was important to study the best means of defining their mandates and objectives, as well as the most appropriate time to send them to the field. In parallel to that internal effort, continuous consultations should be initiated between the Special Committee and the administering Powers with a view to facilitating the task of visiting missions. By the same token, the administering Powers' responsibility to provide the Special Committee with adequate information on the changing political, economic and juridical situation in the Territories must be stressed. He underscored the need for the administering Powers to submit their reports to the Secretariat within the deadlines set by the relevant decisions of the Special Committee and the General Assembly.

32. Turning to the critical issue of economic and other activities which adversely affected the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, he emphasized the international community's responsibility in that regard and the need to affirm yet again the principles reaffirmed in many resolutions of the General Assembly. Every effort must be made to strengthen the capacity of colonial peoples to develop their economic resources. At the same time there was a need to protect the cultural heritage and civilization of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. That would require action on the part of the international community.

33. The role of the specialized agencies and the regional and international organizations concerned, which had a central role to play in helping the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to assume responsibility for the administration of their Territories and benefit fully from their resources, must be broadened and strengthened. That would require practical cooperation on the part of the administering Power and a firm commitment from international donors. Given the special geographical, environmental and topographical characteristics of many Non-Self-Governing Territories, their development could not be sustained without the practical participation of the specialized agencies and the United Nations system in general in the planning and execution of economic and social development projects. There must therefore be coordination among those institutions themselves and between them and the competent regional organizations in order to ensure that projects were complementary and that the population derived maximum benefit from them.

34. The draft resolution proposed for adoption by the General Assembly was certainly important in that it highlighted environmental protection, the alleviation of the effects of natural disasters, the control of drug trafficking and the fight against the illicit exploitation of marine resources, but other areas should receive the same attention, in particular the creation of basic services, vocational training and communications. Scholarships and grants provided by Member States for education and training for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must reflect new development requirements and changes in the concept of capacity-building in a more general sense, as well as the particular needs of each society. As one of the 56 countries which offered such assistance, Egypt hoped

that the system for submitting applications through the United Nations would be improved, so that as many candidates as possible could take advantage of the facilities offered.

35. He reaffirmed that the effectiveness of the decolonization process, in accordance with the Declaration and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, was closely linked to the question of an effective mechanism for follow-up and review by the Special Committee and under the close monitoring of the General Assembly.

36. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) thanked the Special Committee for the work it had done and for the proposals and recommendations it had made. After reviewing the historical background to colonialism, he said that the phenomenon, the decline of which had begun to accelerate at the end of the Second World War, survived to the present day, since 16 Territories remained on the Special Committee's list and were still waiting to exercise their right to self-determination. That was why the General Assembly, in resolution 55/146, had declared the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

37. The United Nations had clearly marked out the path that people should follow in order to gain their freedom, and colonizing States should respect the principles that the Organization had established in that regard. The principle of self-determination, embodied in Article 1 of the Charter, had been reaffirmed in the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which characterized the domination and exploitation of peoples as a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights, and in resolution 1541 (XV), which established the political framework that colonial Territories could adopt. Moreover, Chapter XI of the Charter, which was devoted to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, called on the administering Powers to develop the political, economic and social structures of colonial peoples in preparation for independence.

38. It was not possible to talk of eradicating colonialism and granting colonial peoples the right to self-determination without mentioning the fate of the Palestinian people; Israel had deprived it of its rights, occupied its territory and destroyed its institutions. In that regard, it was important to reaffirm the responsibility that the Organization bore for ensuring that the Palestinian people was able to exercise its right to self-determination and establish a State and for allowing the refugees to return. Mention should also be made of the phenomenon known as neocolonialism, meaning the exploitation of poor countries by certain rich countries and the economic domination imposed on the countries of the South by certain countries of the North, and of the need to combat that phenomenon and to help developing countries to overcome it. The Special Committee was firmly on the side of colonial peoples, and it was to be hoped that, by the end of the Second International Decade, the last of the colonial Territories would have been removed from the Special Committee's list.

39. **Mr. Fadaifard** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, three years after the proclamation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there were still 16 Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. About 2 million people living in those Territories continued to struggle for self-determination and they rightly expected the United Nations to play its cardinal role in the decolonization process and to intensify its efforts towards that end. A solution to the problem of the Territories concerned could be found through the full implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade and the adoption of a pragmatic approach.

40. The Special Committee should continue to promote the decolonization process and to monitor developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, whose peoples should be fully informed of the range of options that self-determination offered them. However, the importance of the Special Committee's case-by-case approach should be underscored. Any new initiative should be in line with the Committee's traditional practices and should do nothing to complicate further the process of decolonization of certain Territories.

41. Greater cooperation with the administering Powers in the development of work programmes for the remaining Territories was a crucial factor in the current decolonization process. His delegation welcomed the cooperation that the United Kingdom had shown in the holding of the regional Seminar in Anguilla. It hoped that, in that same spirit of cooperation, periodic visiting missions could be sent to the Territories and that the information required under Article 73 *e* would be submitted on a regular basis. The positive experience of the Anguilla Seminar would

encourage the holding of future seminars in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific regions.

42. As a member of the Special Committee, his delegation was determined to continue to fulfil its responsibilities. It viewed as an important initiative the Chairman's proposal for the development of a programme of work based on a case-by-case approach, together with a precise timetable for the completion of the decolonization process by the end of the Second Decade.

43. **Mr. Pisa** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that, since the Committee's session the previous year, a number of significant developments had taken place with regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories administered by the United Kingdom. Following the adoption in 2002 of the British Overseas Territories Act, which granted all citizens of those Territories full British citizenship, the right of abode in the United Kingdom and freedom of movement within the European Union, a number of citizens from the British Overseas Territories had applied for British passports. While the number had not been as high as had been anticipated, it had nevertheless been impressive, since over 14,000 passports had been issued by August 2003.

44. At the political level, constitutional reviews were under way in certain Territories (the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands); in others, a committee was canvassing the population's views on that issue (Anguilla) or the constitutional review commission would be established in the near future (the British Virgin Islands). Elections had been held in Bermuda, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands, and Saint Helena was planning to adopt to a new form of government.

45. As for environmental management in the Overseas Territories, his Government was working closely with the Territories in order to fulfil the commitments it had entered into under multilateral environmental agreements and to support the efforts of the Territories themselves to protect and improve their environment. His Government, which had participated fully in a major environmental conference held in Bermuda in March 2003, hoped shortly to announce the provision of additional funds to support environmental work in the Territories and the implementation of the Environment Charters for the Overseas Territories, signed in 2001.

46. On the economic level, his Government was assisting Bermuda, which had been devastated by a hurricane the previous month, and Montserrat, where the collapse in July 2003 of the dome of the Soufrière volcano had caused widespread damage. The United Kingdom was also endeavouring to help certain Territories to obtain economic and trade assistance from the European Union.

47. In terms of the Committee's specific interests, the most significant development had been the decolonization Seminar held in Anguilla from 20 to 22 May 2003 under the auspices of the Special Committee on decolonization. That had been the first time that the Special Committee's annual Seminar had been held in a British Non-Self-Governing Territory. The Seminar, which had been characterized by some frank and at times lively exchanges between representatives of the Territory, the United Kingdom and the members of the Special Committee on decolonization, had enabled all those involved to be better informed about their respective positions. It had shown the extent to which the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories were developing dynamically and enjoying a high degree of self-government; that in turn had a favourable impact on work of the Special Committee on decolonization concerning the de-listing of some Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that context, the representative of the United Kingdom at the Seminar had taken the opportunity to state that, while his Government's policy of informal cooperation with the Special Committee remained unchanged, it would where possible help it to carry out its mandate under General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

48. The next meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, to be held in London in December 2003, would provide an opportunity for further discussion of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories, which allowed the Territories to exercise their right to self-determination and to run their own affairs to the greatest possible extent. There seemed to be no strong desire in the Territories to choose the path of independence, although his Government had made clear that it would give every encouragement if they chose to do so, where independence was an option. The key therefore, as long as the Territories chose to retain their links with the United Kingdom, would be to try to

reconcile their desire for greater autonomy with the United Kingdom's responsibility to ensure good governance, to protect the impartiality of the public service and the independence of the judiciary, and to ensure compliance with international obligations.

49. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that his Government attached great importance to the full implementation of the resolutions on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Indonesian Constitution solemnly stated that independence was the right of all nations. Since the historic adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), much had been achieved in the implementation of the goals which constituted the Committee's mandate. The record spoke for itself.

50. Most of the 114 Territories subject to Trusteeship Agreements or included in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1945 had become independent, been integrated into the administering Powers or entered into free association. That meant that the Committee's mandate must be pursued until the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories had achieved self-determination.

51. His delegation noted that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would end in 2010. The Committee must therefore pursue its decolonization task with renewed determination in order to complete it within the remaining seven years.

52. His delegation had always shared the Committee's view that each case of decolonization must be dealt with separately and that no universal criteria could be applied. That was why it had always been committed to a comprehensive solution based on the specific characteristics of each of the remaining 16 Territories. It believed, however, that through the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principles of the Charter and international law, the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would soon enjoy self-determination, leading to the completion of the Committee's mandate.

53. His delegation welcomed the first-ever convening of the Caribbean Regional Seminar on Advancing the Decolonization Process in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in Anguilla in May 2003. That clearly indicated that the administering Powers had a critical role to play in the process.

54. Member States should help the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve their full political, economic and social potential; it should be possible to achieve that within the second Decade if Member States redoubled their efforts. Everything depended on the commitment and cooperation of all the parties involved, in particular the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It was the latter's particular responsibility to continue to offer assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories, as they had successfully done to date. Of particular importance was the agencies' role in implementing the manpower and educational development programmes needed by the Territories. He hoped that the Committee would be able to cooperate with the specialized agencies in that respect.

55. While he reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to the strengthening of the role, capacity and effectiveness of the United Nations, he said that his delegation intended to play a more active role in the Committee in order to help it to improve its performance, realize its full potential and respond more effectively to the challenges of the future.

56. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that the Committee's work continued to underlie the endeavours of the United Nations to help colonial countries and peoples to exercise their right to self-determination and to strive for independence. The historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted in 1960, had served to accelerate the decolonization process across the world. Historic achievements had been made with the assistance of the United Nations, marking a success for the Organization, as the Secretary-General had pointed out.

57. There were 2 million people living in 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism reflected the common aspiration of the Member States to reach an early conclusion to the decolonization process. It was therefore the duty of the Member States to attach the proper importance to the rights and interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to help them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration. The Fourth Committee bore the major responsibility in that regard. His delegation supported the proposal put forward by the Secretary-General in his letter

addressed to the Anguilla Seminar held in May, urging the Special Committee to continue its efforts to devise an appropriate format and timetable for the decolonization of each Territory. It looked forward to closer cooperation between the administering Powers and the United Nations.

58. The administering Powers should strike a balance between achieving the social, economic, cultural and educational development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories — most of which were small and had very fragile ecosystems — and protecting their natural and human resources.

59. His Government had consistently supported the efforts of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. His delegation would continue to participate actively in the work of the United Nations in that field and to cooperate closely with other members of the Committee in order to fulfil the historic mission set out in the Charter and the Declaration.

60. **Ms. Seth** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that the issue of decolonization was not only unfinished business of the United Nations, but was also a larger issue for Latin America and the Caribbean, insofar as eight of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Americas and seven of them were small island developing countries in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Community therefore took more than a passing interest in the political, socio-economic and constitutional development of those Territories.

61. Bermuda's accession to CARICOM in July had brought to six the number of Caribbean Territories that had achieved either associate or full membership status; the admission of a seventh was pending and was likely to be approved. To varying degrees, all those Territories were members of regional bodies. Three of them were associated with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and two — Anguilla and Montserrat — shared a common currency with their independent neighbours. They were an integral part of the Caribbean regional integration movement and their transition from political dependency to full self-government would benefit not only the Territories themselves, but also the wider region as a whole.

62. The realization of the universal right to self-determination for the peoples of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories continued to be impeded in large measure by the information deficit among the people of the Territories and among the Member States themselves. That was largely the result of the partial and incomplete implementation of the Plan of Action for the two International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism. As the representative of one Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territory had told the Special Committee on decolonization in June 2003, the creation of political education in the Territories was critical to their development process, and their constitutional and political advancement depended on the dissemination of unbiased information about the legitimate alternatives available to them (independence, free association and integration). That had not occurred.

63. Moreover, Member States lacked adequate information on the contemporary colonial dynamic in the Territories. Yet, such information was critical if one was to understand the often complex nature of the situation on the ground and to make informed decisions, in the Committee, to bridge the democratic deficit inherent in even the most benevolent colonial models. Indeed, the dissemination of information on decolonization was lacking on all sides and the United Nations machinery responsible for analysing the situation in those Territories and for disseminating that information needed to accelerate its efforts to fulfil its mandate.

64. She stressed the importance of regional seminars that helped to bridge the information gap. The holding of the 2003 Seminar in Anguilla, a Non-Self-Governing Territory, had been an historic first. The Caribbean Community congratulated the Government of Anguilla on having provided excellent facilities and commended the United Kingdom Government for the flexibility and foresight it had shown in agreeing to the bold proposal made by the Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization. The United Kingdom representative at the Seminar should also be commended for his constructive engagement with the various representatives who had attended.

65. The Anguilla Seminar had revealed that the representatives of most of the Territories who had attended as Heads of Government or Ministers had not been informed of their political options and had been under the mistaken impression that continued dependency or immediate independence were their only alternatives. They had clearly been ill-informed

and the United Nations must ensure that that situation was remedied.

66. The United Nations could carry out its mandate on decolonization only if there was a concerted focus on implementation. The legitimization of the current dependency arrangements for expediency's sake could not be an acceptable approach. The Caribbean Community looked forward to studying the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of resolutions relating to decolonization over the past 12 years since the declaration of the first International Decade in 1991. It did not expect the report to contain a mere recitation of replies from a fraction of Member States, as was generally the case with such reports; it expected it to encapsulate the activities of the United Nations system in carrying out its mandate, and indicate the difficulties encountered so that assistance could be rendered where necessary.

67. The international community must, in keeping with the Millennium Declaration, dedicate itself with renewed energy to helping peoples still under colonial domination to exercise their right to self-determination, as stated by the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, Mr. Julian Hunte, a former chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization, when he had pointed out that many of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were located in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Community also endorsed the view expressed by the Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, who had underlined the continued validity of the principle of the fundamental and inalienable right of peoples to self-determination and had renewed their commitment to hasten the complete elimination of colonialism and to support the effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade.

68. Another crucial form of communication was for the representatives of the peoples themselves to deliver to the Special Committee on decolonization and to the Fourth Committee statements containing their first-hand assessment of the situation in the Territories. The proposal that agenda items on decolonization should be referred directly to the plenary once they had been considered by the Special Committee on decolonization, bypassing the Fourth Committee, was a source of grave concern to the Caribbean Community and other delegations. Such a move would deprive the representatives of the Territories of the opportunity they had always had to present their views to Member States. The colonial dilemma could not be resolved by limiting further the access of the peoples of the Territories to the very international process designed to help them. Such access should be enhanced, not limited. While the General Assembly certainly needed to be revitalized, the proposed move would be extremely unwise. The Caribbean Community urged that the reports of the Special Committee on decolonization should continue to be reviewed by the Fourth Committee, in which representatives of the Territories could furnish Member States with information on the situation on the ground. Every available instrument of mass dissemination of information was needed to overcome the continuing information deficit regarding decolonization.

69. On the question of Western Sahara, the Caribbean Community reaffirmed its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to enforce the peace plan so as to enable the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination, a principle which the Caribbean Community fully supported.

70. The Caribbean Community fully supported the draft resolution on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations. It commended the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other United Nations bodies for their consistent support to the Territories in their socio-economic and constitutional development. It regretted, however, that that important resolution had long been the subject of a number of abstentions within the Committee, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Caribbean Community hoped that consultations would yield consensus on a streamlined companion text that should be circulated for the consideration of the General Assembly.

71. **Mr. Pisa** (United Kingdom), speaking in the exercise of the right of reply to the statements made earlier by the representatives of Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela concerning the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that his country's position was well known and that the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom had recently stated it in detail, in

writing, in the exercise of his right of reply to the statement made by the President of Argentina in the General Assembly on 25 September 2003.

Requests for hearings

72. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-memoire No. 1/03 which reported 13 requests for hearings on the questions of Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands and Western Sahara. He suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the requests should be distributed as documents of the Committee and considered at a later meeting.

73. *It was so decided.*

74. **The Chairman** suggested that any further requests for hearings should be circulated as documents of the Committee and considered at the next meeting.

75. *It was so decided.*

76. **The Chairman** announced that he had received a communication from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, who wished to address the Committee.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.